

A NEW SPECIES OF WEDELIA (ASTERACEAE-HELIANTHAEAE)  
FROM NEUVO LEON, MEXICO

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Recent collections among the precipitous upper limestone ridges of the east-facing Sierra Madre Orientale overlooking the city of Monterrey has revealed the following novelty. It is placed in the genus Wedelia with some hesitation since it might equally be placed in the genus Aspilia (sensu H. Robinson, 1984) because it has "a constricted apical crown bearing all the pappus elements, having little or no wing on the achene, and having sterile rays." Aspilia is supposedly distinguished from Wedelia by its pistillate but sterile ray florets and largely wingless achenes. The present species, while mostly bearing sterile ray florets, does produce the occasional ray achene which is seemingly fertile, being distinguished from those of the disc by being nearly glabrous.

McVaugh (1984) includes the Mexican species of Aspilia occurring in his Flora Novo-galiciana within Wedelia, commenting that "The distinction between Wedelia and the genus Aspilia Thoars is not always a clear one." A comment that appears valid to me, in spite of Robinson's (1984) efforts to maintain both.

Wedelia ayerscottiana B. L. Turner, Fig. 1

Wedelia hispida accedens sed caulibus tenuibus simplicibus capitulis minoribus, pedunculis brevioribus, achaenis variegatis nonalatis, etc.

Perennial erect or weakly ascending herb to 1 m high. Stems terete, striate, mostly unbranched, stiffly hirsute with multicellular spreading trichomes, 1-2 mm long, these interspersed among a much shorter indument of scabrid, often glandular, hairs. Leaves opposite, 4-8 cm long, 2-3 cm wide; petioles 2-6 mm long, stiffly-hirsute; blades narrowly triangular, acutely tapering onto the petioles, 3-nerved from above the base, coarsely and evenly hispid on both surfaces, the margins minutely crenulate to irregularly and coarsely dentate, darkening upon drying, the upper surface more so. Heads 3-6 in terminal or axillary cymules, the peduncles 2.0-4.5 cm long. Involucres campanulate, 7-8 mm high, 5-12 mm wide; bracts about equal, in 3 series, the outer-most broadly ovate to obovate, leafy, 4-6(7) mm long, 3-4 mm wide coarsely hispid, the middle and inner-most broadly obovate, scarious and yellowish-erose above, puberulent to glabrous. Chaff somewhat shorter than the subtended florets, yellow above, purplish below, with a prominent purple mid-nerve and bright yellow appendages. Ray florets 8, pistillate, fertile or often not so; corollas yellow, the ligules 6-7 mm long, 3.0-3.5 mm wide. Disk florets 30-

50; corollas yellow, ca 5 mm long, glabrous, the tube ca 1.5 mm long, tapering into a narrowly funnelform throat, the lobes ca 0.8 mm long. Achenes essentially monomorphic, markedly mottled, obovate, the body ca 4 mm long, ca 1.8 mm wide, bearing at its apex a slender neck ca 0.6 mm long which is topped by a minute scaly crown ca 0.2 mm high.

TYPE: MEXICO. Nuevo Leon: Slopes above Chipinque Mesa and Motel, SW and overlooking Monterrey, ca 6000 ft elevation. Oak-pine forests; 12 Oct 1985; B. L. Turner, T. Ayers and R. Scott 15609 (holotype TEX; isotype MEXU).

When first encountered I thought the plants concerned belonged to the common Aldama dentata Llave. In living plants the habitual resemblance is remarkable. The heads are also remarkably similar, being about the same size with similar involucre bracts, including texture and dark striations which are so characteristic of A. dentata. The achenal characters, etc., are like those of Wedelia except that the achenes of both ray and disc florets are alike, both lacking any sign of wings and those of the ray not at all 3-angled. Except for its neck structure and basal elaisome, the body of the achene is surprisingly like that of Viguiera dentata.

Wedelia ayerscottiana was rare at the site concerned, only two plants having been observed, both growing in the leafy-litter of an oak-dominated low forest. It occurs with a bevy of yet other local composite endemics including Ageratina rollinsii Turner, A. viburnoides (DC.) K. & R., Flyriella leonensis (B. L. Rob) K. & R., Vigethia mexicana Wats., etc.

The species is named for my two field companions, both in the terminal year of their doctoral and both in love with botany and each other. I have taken liberty to perpetuate these facts, at least in name, if not spirit.

#### LITERATURE CITED

- McVaugh, R. 1984. Wedelia. Flora Novo-galeciana: 12: 1080-1092.
- Robinson, H. 1984. Studies in the Heliantheae (Asteraceae). XXXIX. New Species of Aspilja from Brazil. Phytologia 56: 262-274.

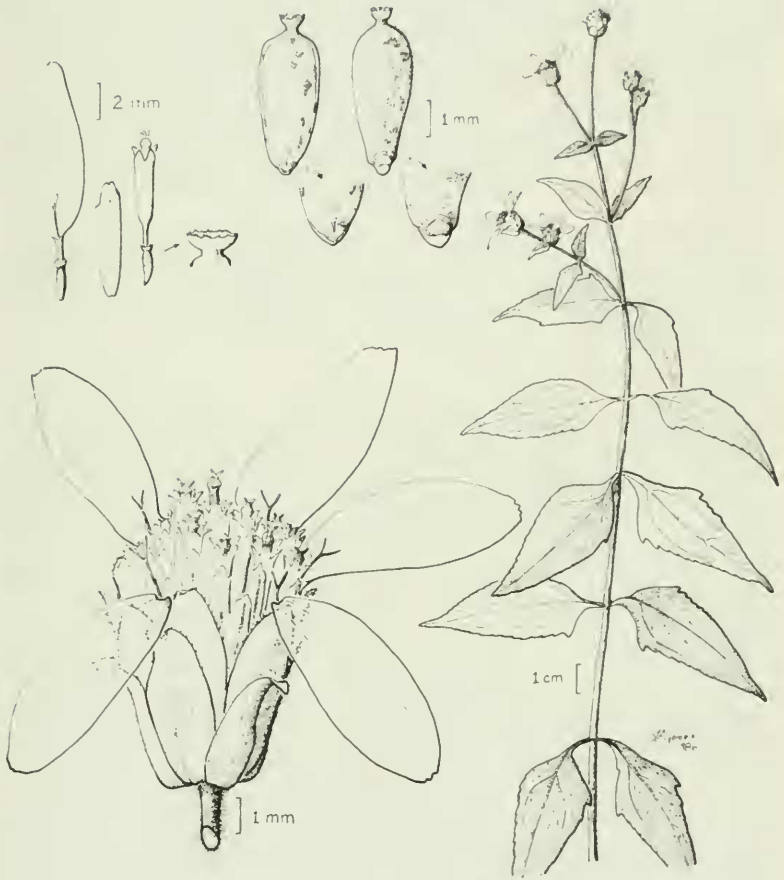


Fig 1 WEDELIA AYERSCOTTIANA, from holotype.